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Promoting Institutional Repositories Through Collaboration

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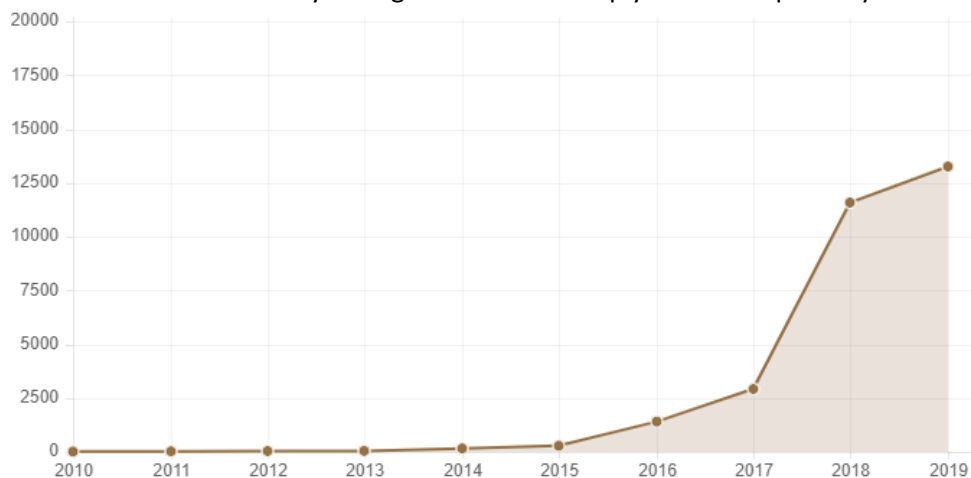
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The phrase “open access” (OA) has been moving increasingly into the lay vocabulary. Among an array of options for faculty to contribute to open access is “green archiving,” meaning to deposit copies of scholarship in a scholarly repository. Aside from subject repositories such as arXiv and federal repositories like BioMed Central, other options include institutional repositories. At William & Mary, W&M ScholarWorks (<https://scholarworks.wm.edu/>) serves as the university’s open access institutional repository (IR). William & Mary is a small, liberal arts university, with nearly 9,000 students. In the context of our campus discussions on open access and “Big Deals”, faculty and students are encouraged to deposit their scholarship in the repository as a low-effort way to promote access to their work while benefitting from the OA citation advantage.

While conversations about submitting scholarship to the repository now take place frequently, in 2015, staffing for the repository was minimal. At that time, there were only 282 publications in it, and no one staff was dedicated full-time to promoting it. By fall, 2017 not only were two full-time librarians dedicated to ScholarWorks, but there was additional support from a number of other staff and through a number of activities. Resultingly, publications added to the repository increased as indicated in Figure 1 and it now houses over 14,000 publications. In this article, we offer a few strategies for your consideration and which you might take to build up your own repository.



Clearly, having people dedicated to the task helped at William & Mary. In a small library (~60 staff), it's also important to work together on projects. We had several opportunities to do so via partnerships between staff in several library departments, including Content Services, Special Collections, Instruction and Research, with branch librarians and the administration.

In 2018, we decided to rebrand the IR, enhance it and roll out a new look. We made the site more visually interesting and did more to promote archiving works there. Additionally, we coordinated the relaunch with Open Access Week and a project adding over 5,000 W&M theses and dissertations from a large retrospective digitization project.

Concurrent with the rebranding and retrospective digitization project, several new research and instruction librarians were hired and an updated model for their roles was established. New responsibilities for instruction and research librarians included engagement and scholarly communications. The Digital Scholarship Librarian worked together with the new and the remaining instruction and research librarians to get them up to speed on scholarly communications issues, such as open access, fair use and the repository, and also to promote the newly named W&M ScholarWorks in departmental presentations to faculty.

Making the Pitch

The Science Librarian at William & Mary Libraries is a member of the Instruction & Research Department and liaises with the physics, applied science, biology, geology, and chemistry departments. A new librarian started in this role in 2017, just as W&M ScholarWorks was becoming an institutional priority. Through conversations with the Digital Scholarship Librarian, it was decided that ScholarWorks would be marketed in initial introductory meetings with faculty.

Through these conversations with faculty, it became apparent that the low participation in ScholarWorks was due to a lack of awareness rather than a lack of interest. Many of the meetings yielded CV's, which were sent along to the library team for processing. Faculty became excited when they heard about the advantages of putting their publications in ScholarWorks. Over the course of the year, four aspects of the "pitch" were identified as effective marketing:

1. **Impact:** Open-access publications have been shown to have greater impact. Research published outside of a paywall by William & Mary authors is cited nearly twice as much as that published in subscription-based journals. Increased discoverability in Google Scholar is particularly impactful to science faculty, who are heavy users of that platform.
2. **Statistics:** ScholarWorks regularly sends out statistics about the number of downloads per article. This is a greater depth of information than the standard journal platform and can be used by faculty to demonstrate the reach and impact of their scholarship.
3. **Success Stories:** At William & Mary, the best example of a success story is the gray literature of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS). The VIMS librarians digitized reports that had previously only existed in physical form at the VIMS Hargis Library.

Since posting them in ScholarWorks, there have been 53,000 downloads of these articles – 32,000 in the last year alone.

4. Little Effort: This might be the most important of the pitch. Faculty balance many competing priorities and the idea of uploading their own publications may seem daunting. At William and Mary we request their CV's and check the copyright permissions for their publications. The only thing they need to do is send us the correct versions of their articles – we handle the rest.

This four-part pitch has been used informally in one-on-one conversations with faculty as well as in presentations. Most recently it was used in a Geology Department faculty meeting that resulted in several faculty members submitting their publications to ScholarWorks.

Collaboration between the liaison librarians and the Digital Scholarship Librarian is the most critical aspect of any efforts to grow the institutional repository. Having a specialist advise liaisons on how to communicate the benefits of the IR and tailor their “pitch” to individual departments is invaluable. Recently the libraries reached out to the Center for Conservation Biology (CCB), a research group based partially at William & Mary. The advantage in using ScholarWorks wasn't immediately apparent, but through collaboration the Science Librarian and Digital Scholarship Librarian were able to identify that the center produced technical reports that were inaccessible to the public. The messaging to the CCB was successful because it focused on increased access to these reports, and they are currently in the process of moving their publications over to ScholarWorks.

Expanding Awareness

At William & Mary, Swem library is known to be one of the designated places that faculty and students alike congregate to discover collected knowledge, examine treasures, and share new findings. Archivist, librarians, faculty, and staff collaborate to not only build collections to support curriculums, campus communities, and special collections; but also to bring awareness to the ongoing scholarship of faculty.

It's sometimes hard to imagine that you can augment an existing program to increase awareness of something you have been doing successfully for a while, but that's exactly what happened at Swem. Liaisons collaborated for years with special collections Exhibit's Manager to curate “Scholarship on Display”, an exhibit that highlights faculty research. However, it wasn't until a conversation between our Digital Scholarship Librarian and Exhibits Manager prompted the idea of inviting faculty who agreed to participate in the exhibit have their work included in ScholarWorks.

The liaison used her connection to the faculty chair to build and deepen rapport with the rest of the department. A meeting with the Digital Scholarship Librarian and liaison provided an opportunity for faculty to get a thorough understanding of ScholarWorks and to ask questions. Faculty were in awe and the partnership thrived to build the exhibit.

Prior to this exhibit, none of the faculty from the Africana Studies Program featured their work in ScholarWorks or any other open access platforms. By the opening of this exhibit, twenty-six new publications were added from this department. To date there have been over nine-hundred (900) downloads of this research.

This experience demonstrates how librarians and faculty can support each other in teaching and learning by expanding an existing program to provide more access to faculty scholarship.

Takeaways

For this effort to work, staff in the library needed to know a fair amount about ScholarWorks and scholarly communications in order to be able to promote and explain it. New resources in the form of “talking points”, one-on-one training sessions and LibGuides were developed to accomplish those goals. In training library staff on the repository and scholarly communications, and engaging with faculty, librarians involved became much more familiar with research coming from the campus community.

Of course, it was key that the instruction and research and other librarians who participated in these efforts were interested in learning more about scholarly communications and had the capacity to do so. It should also be stated that the Dean of Libraries was a champion for the repository. Through our experiences that year, we discovered the importance of engaging with a wide range of staff, such as our exhibits staff, in order to be successful, sometimes in ways that we hadn’t contemplated.

Finally, we learned that it takes a while to build faculty champions for the repository as there may be a lack of faculty interest and it takes lead time for the impact data to come in. The new energy and interest in scholarly communications served well to ensure that faculty from across campus were hearing about and participating in ScholarWorks. In addition to new exposure to faculty in Africana Studies and in STEM (among others), a more recent focus on collecting grey literature and migrating journals to our open access repository ensure that individuals around the globe will have ready access to William & Mary scholarship. Given their experience in supporting these activities, W&M librarians are now well-poised to make connections between the IR and the evolving scholarly landscape.